



National University of Science and Technology

Think in Other Terms



**OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES, OR NEW WINE IN NEW BOTTLES? A STUDY
OF THE INTERACTIVITY OF ONLINE MAINSTREAM TRADITIONAL NEWS
WEBSITES VIS-À-VIS THE INTERACTIVITY OF THEIR OFFLINE
VERSIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE *HERALD* AND *DAILY NEWS*.**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE
DEGREE**

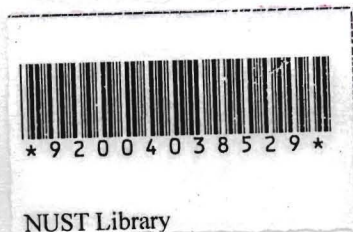
IN

JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES

**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE**

SUPERVISOR: MS. N. NYATHI

YEAR: 2015



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Abstract

The advent of the internet revolutionized the practice of journalism. News, which for decades had been accessed mainly via the printed paper, took up a new electronic form online. Emancipatory media theorists, who for years had criticized the traditional model of journalism with its perception of a passive audience, ululated as they thought that that the internet was the saviour that would set people free from the bondage of a linear form of communication through taking advantage of the interactive features of the internet to engage the audience. However, decades later there is evidence that shows that the ululations by emancipatory media theorists might have been premature. As highlighted by Deuze (2001), research that has been conducted on how online journalism has utilized the interactive features of the internet has yielded disappointing results. It has shown that the media are reluctant to change their traditional perception of the audience and continue to regard them with scepticism, suspicion and derision (Chow 2012). Some scholars have argued that emphasis online has remained upon a one way flow of information (Johnson 1997). It was against such a background that this study sought to ascertain how Zimbabwean mainstream websites (*Herald* and *Daily News*) are utilizing the interactive features to serve their audience. It sought to ascertain whether the two papers have made significant efforts to change their traditional perception of the audience as per the demands of the new medium.

The study was framed and guided by three theories, namely the concept of interactivity, political economy theory and structuration theory. Through quantitative content analysis, questionnaires and interviews employed as data gathering tools, the study reveals that *The Herald* and *Daily News* websites are not adequately utilizing the interactive features of the internet to serve their audience. Emphasis remains on a unidirectional flow of information, from the papers to the audience. Hence these websites are not interactive at all. They are merely replicas of their offline versions.